

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 3, 6 and 7 as follows:

(A copy of the marked-up version of amended claims are attached to this Preliminary Amendment).

3. (Amended) A protection method according to claim 1, characterized in that each routine operating on said data implements said verification operation (400).

6. (Amended) A protection device according to claim 4, characterized in that each routine operating on said data implements said verification system (104, 105, 106).

7. (Amended) A franking machine (1), characterized in that it includes a device according to claim 4.

Please add new claims 8-11 as follows:

--8. A protection method according to claim 2, characterized in that each routine operating on said data implements said verification operation (400).

9. A protection device according to claim 5, characterized in that each routine operating on said data implements said verification system (104, 105, 106).

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10. A franking machine (1), characterized in that it includes a device according to claim 5.

11. A franking machine (1), characterized in that it includes a device according to claim 6.--

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please add an Abstract of the Disclosure submitted herewith on a separate page.